

Weaving the Future: Connectional Conversations

Bishop David Alan Bard

September 24, October 2, November 20, December 7, 2017

Guidelines for Our Time Together

1. We desire to make this a safe space for all present
2. We trust that we are two or more gathered in the name of Jesus and therefore Jesus is present with us
3. We will be open to God's Spirit in our speaking and listening
4. We will respect one another, seeing each person as a unique and beautiful creation of God
5. When we speak we will attempt to speak:
 - a. Clearly
 - b. Personally – that is, use “I” statements, don't appeal to some identified “we”
 - c. Succinctly, knowing that others would also like to speak and that they also have wisdom to share
 - d. Wisely – using words meant to communicate respectfully, not wound or win points
6. When others are speaking we will listen:
 - a. Intentionally – trusting that others have something important to be heard
 - b. Intently – attempting to understand deeply, not respond quickly
 - c. Seeking to keep heart and mind open
7. We agree to let our facilitator remind us of these guidelines and monitor the emotional temperature of the conversation

The Holy Spirit meets us in particular specific occasions, and we steer through the very concrete paths of life as individuals, making our own decisions about sex in the light of the guidance of the Church under the Word, with the support and encouragement of the community of faith. This latter point is more than rhetoric, or should become more than words; the community, if it is to be an encouragement, must encourage frankness and honesty, adult truthfulness and the bearing of pain between friends. As individuals we have our unique problems and common problems, and need to develop honest openness to enable us to face these together. This is the common ground, painful to both sides of the argument, that must be claimed together and possessed. *The Way Forward: Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*, 220

Wesley emphasizes that the great divides are not merely theological differences but rather the deep personal animosity, bitter arguments, and spitefulness that often accompanies theological differences.... Many of the ways in which Christians deal with their theological and ethical differences are the opposite of what Wesley regarded as holiness. They display a pride that assumes the correctness of one's own opinions, contempt of and condemnation of one's opponents, a quickness to assume the worst of one's opponents, and an unwillingness to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts.... Theological and ethical diversity provides an opportunity for us to grow in holiness.... For participation in a diverse community to achieve its sanctifying potential, it must be approached and responded to as a means of grace with the goal of embodying and growing in love. *David Field, Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease*, 64, 31-32